



**Carl J. Florea**  
Office of the Mayor  
City of Leavenworth

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Community Members,

One of the things I am excited to be working on is helping our great community plan and vision for the future. What do you see when you envision our community in 10, 15, 20 years? What does a sustainable tourism town look like? Does it house a good share of its workforce, or is it primarily a retirement community for the wealthy and a few high income families? Does it still enjoy pristine waters, salmon runs, and accessible alpine vistas, or has the river become only a “natural” waterpark with such heavy usage that the salmon are no longer welcome, and the trails are no longer taking us to wilderness vistas, but overrun and overused and lined with trash? Where do we want to go with this great community and its environment, and how do we get there from here? All of this is about visioning together. Visioning can be messy, sometimes contentious, but it is above all, a vitally important process that requires all of us to be engaged. This is what I had hoped to start for us in April, before this pandemic put everything on hold.

Well, not everything is on hold. This city is involved with two big community projects / processes this fall. They are exciting, vitally important, and directly related to the broader visioning process. And while both of them would benefit from some large, face-to-face gatherings of our community, that is simply not possible at this time. These activities are time sensitive and we do not have the luxury of putting them off until the pandemic is past us. Thus, we are going to do our best to gather the public’s input in many and various ways.

The first community conversation is to create a housing action plan. This is being driven at the current time by a grant we received from the state’s Department of Commerce. The goal is to help us assess our current housing, what we are missing, and how we can move forward to fill in the gaps. A big piece of this is to understand the community and our workforce. We want to know your housing stories. How and why are you here? What has your housing story been? What has worked and hasn’t worked for you? We want stories of those who are residents, and we want to hear from those who would be residents if we had the housing for them. Please share your stories with the Council, Planning Commission, and of course, with me. September is a key month, but we will get the word out in a variety of ways when the specific details are in place. Stay tuned, and please plan to help us shape this significant community action plan!

The second public process is to dream about a new use for Osborn Elementary. Many of you know that the city was given the right of first refusal on that site if the school district chose to surplus it. The Cascade School District did, indeed, follow through on this, and completed the process to surplus the site by June 30. In our agreement with them, the city had until September 30 to complete the purchase. Because we really wanted to do the visioning process with the community’s engagement prior to the purchase, we asked the school district to give us an extension to the end of the year. They graciously granted us this extension. So, besides doing the necessary due diligence on the building and site, the appraisal and the environmental reviews, we are committed to having a robust opportunity for the community to share its vision for this important investment in our future together. We know that there is a strong interest in a city park on the site. But I have also heard from those who hope to have a community center there. Some have mentioned siting a business incubator there. One suggestion I heard was a center for all the community nonprofits that add so much to our life together. And, of course, a favorite goal of mine, affordable housing has also been mentioned. The important thing is, all of these are valid, all of these have merit. Indeed, the space is big enough that a hybrid of two or even three of these options could be possible. The important thing is, we are going to be given a blank canvas on which the community will be able to paint something beautiful, significant, and reflective of the values of dreams of our future together. So, get ready for this process as well, because we will not be able to wait until everything is settled down.

We are all in this together. That is true not just about COVID, but about every aspect of community. Roll up your sleeves, and work on this vision with us! And, as always, stay safe!



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